

Plant Adaptation and Strategy Cards

spines

Keep Away! Spines and thorns help stop herbivores from eating the juicy insides of a plant. Sometimes just the stem is spiny. Other times the entire plant is covered in spines.

bushy and low-growing

Hunker Down! Some bushy plants stay warm during cold months by keeping close to the ground. A bushy, compact plant will also hold in heat, by acting like a blanket.

root systems

Send out the Reconnaissance! Many plants send out extensive roots in search of water and nutrients and other places to sprout new “satellite” plants. Some have shallow, spreading roots and some have deep taproots.

hairy leaves, stems, or seeds

Brrrr...Time for a Sweater! Just like the hair on your head, plants produce hairs on their leaves, stems, and seeds for warmth. Hairy leaves can also help to protect plants from solar radiation and from drying out in the wind.

waxy leaves and stems

Batten Down the Hatches! A waxy coating can be found on some desert and alpine plants’ leaves and stems. The wax prevents moisture from evaporating and helps to store water inside.

light colors

Sunscreen Please! Many desert and alpine plants have a light, gray-green color. This color helps to reflect harmful, destructive solar radiation. It is like sunscreen.

bright blossoms

I Demand Attention! Bees, hummingbirds, and other insects are attracted to colorful blossoms in their search for sweet nectar. When birds and insects drink nectar they help with pollination.

seed dispersal

Stowaway! Some seeds have burrs and tiny thorns that catch on animal fur and clothing. That way seeds can travel many miles. Seeds with specialized “floating devices” may also travel by air